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ABSTRACT

An analysis of noun classes in Tikar, a Benue-Congo language spoken in west central Cameroon, looks at patterns in the noun class system, concord system (possessives, demonstratives, demonstrative adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, third-person pronouns, relative pronouns, copula, adjectivals, and numerals) with an eye to determining whether Tikar is a bantoid language or not. It is concluded that it is a bantoid language, both genetically and typologically. The vocabulary is found to be reminiscent of Bantu, with a clear system of noun classes. While there is not an elaborate system of prefixes, the nouns fall into very definite classes, with a clear system of concord. It is proposed that an examination of the morphological and syntactic structure of Tikar's other constituents and its phonological characteristics would reveal marked similarities to the general features of southern bantoid language. (MSE)

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Carol Stanley-Thorne

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Noun classes in Tikar

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1. Introduction

Tikar is a Benue-Congo language spoken in west-central Cameroon. Although there seems to be common agreement that Tikar is a bantoid, the specific classification of the language varies from one linguist to another. Greenberg (1974) classified it as Bantoid, a term which he too used in the genetic sense, for a branch of the Benue-Congo family. Williamson (1971) placed it in the Benue-Congo group of languages as follows:

D. Bantoid 2. bantu e. Tikar group 1. Tikar

In a more recent classification, Watters and Leroy (1989) listed it as one of eleven parallel branches of Southern Bantoid. The authors of the Linguistic Atlas of Cameroon (1983) placed it under the umbrella of "Bantoid", but at the juncture of Grassfields Bantu, Mbam Bantu and Equatorial Bantu. They suggested it be linked to the Bantu languages. Earlier linguists, obviously undecided as to exactly where it fit, described it in a variety of ways. Westermann and Bryan (1952) considered it to be a language by itself among the class languages. Similarly, Tessmann (1932) classified it as a "Nicht-typische Klassensprachen" (a non-typical class language). Richardson (1957:49-51) classified Tikar as a Bantoid language, but for him, the term "Bantoid" referred to languages "which have (a) an elaborate system of class prefixes showing no regular relationship to the Bantu classes, (b) a vocabulary which is at times reminiscent of Bantu, but which cannot be related by fixed rules to a set of hypothetical common roots." Therefore, he used both genetic and typological features to decide whether or not a language was Bantoid. Tikar definitely has a vocabulary at times reminiscent of Bantu. A comparison of the Swadesh 100-word list in Tikar and in Bafia, a Narrow Bantu language (A53) spoken in south-central Cameroon, revealed approximately 50% clear cognates and another 15% possible cognates. Among the cognates were words such as the following:

(1)	mwɛn/bwɛn*	"child/children"
	mwum/bwum	"person/people"
	mbɔʔ, bɨ̂, nyɨ̂, tə̂nnɨ̀	"one, two, four, nine"
	zwùm	"stomach"
	kwù	"foot"
	jin	"tooth/name"
	nywiʔ	"month/moon"
	wù	"you (sg.)"

*All unmarked tones in the data are phonologically non-low level tones.

Richardson noted the definite Bantu associations in the vocabulary items. In fact, according to him, "while no regular correspondances are evident, most of the vocabulary has definite Bantu associations".[1] To say that <u>most</u> of the vocabulary has Bantu associations is, in our opinion, an exaggeration; however, there is no doubt that certain vocabulary items do bear a strong resemblance to the corresponding Bantu words. And, as Richardson (1957) noted, there is the presence of a feature common to many Bantu languages, namely, the identical shape in the singular form of the words for 'name' and 'tooth'.

As far as a noun class system is concerned, while there is not an "elaborate" system of prefixes, the nouns in Tikar do very definitely fall into specific classes. Hagège (1969) only saw "traces d'un système à classes nominales" and Richardson (1957), while affirming the presence of noun classes, said that the system is unlike that found in Bantu languages. In that, he was correct, as we will see later in our detailed discussion of the Tikar noun class system.

And, in addition, contrary to Westermann and Bryan's (1952:125) conclusion that "no clear concord system is discernible", there is a very definite concord system in Tikar which affects a wide variety of paradigms, including possessives, demonstratives, relative pronouns, subject and object pronouns, and adjectives, as well as copulas and numbers. It should perhaps be noted that Richardson (1957) did mention the possibility of a concord system.

A detailled look at the noun class system in Tikar will show that the language has both morphological and syntactical features characteristic of Southern Bantoid languages as described by Watters and Leroy (1989).

2. Noun class system

As we have already said, the nouns in Tikar belong to specific classes. However, those classes are not defined according to a series of singular/plural prefixes or suffixes, as is the case in Bantu languages. There are only two prefixes in the singular (and in fact, one must consider Ø- a "prefix", in order to talk about two), and two in the plural (or three, if one counts the few instances where there is a Ø-prefix). Therefore, an attempt to establish a list of the Tikar nouns according to classes defined by prefixes proved unsatisfactory. However, in Tikar, as is also true in the case of many of the Gur languages, there are what Welmers (1973:191) referred to as "functional noun classes". He noted that in Senari, for example, there are three singular and three plural noun classes, with regular singular-plural pairing, and two classes indicating masses". He said that "the classes are most conveniently identified by morphemes which may be called 'identifiers' (ID); they mean 'it is a...' or 'they are...'" An application of the same analysis to Tikar nouns provides the means of setting up a very clear system of classes. With very few exceptions, Tikar nouns divide into a series of eight binary oppositions based on these identifiers, or "morphèmes d'actualisation", in Houis' teminology[2]. There are three singular classes and three plural classes. With one exception, all singular-plural pairings are possible, giving eight genders. The following chart shows the possible combinations of classes. The one combination which has not yet been found in the data is 1-6.

singular		plural	
identi-fier	class	class	identi-fier
nɛ	1	2	bɛ
sɛ	3	4	yɛ
yɛ	5	6	nɛ

Table 1: Pairing of classes

Examples:

(2) 1-2

nyàm nɛ	"It's (a/the) animal."
animal ID	
mɛ̀-nyàm bɛ	"They're (the) animals."
PL-animal ID	
nye nɛ	"It's (a/the) house."
house ID	
mɛ̀-nye bɛ	"They're (the) houses."
PL-house ID	

(3) 3-2

m̀bɔ̀	sɛ	"It's (an/the) antelope."
antelope	ID	
mɛ-mbɔ̀	bɛ	"They're (the) antelopes."
PL-antelope	ID	

(4) 3-4

lɛ̀	sɛ	"It's (a/the) net."
net	ID	
yì-lɛ̀	yɛ	"They're (the) nets."
PL-net	ID	

(5) 5-6

m̀kpaʔ	yɛ	"It's (a/the) leg."
leg	ID	
mɛ-mkpaʔ	nɛ	"They're (the) legs."
PL-leg	ID	

Table 2 shows the division into genders and classes.

Genders	Classes
I	1-2
II	1-4
II	3-2
IV	3-4
V	3-6
VI	5-2
VII	5-4
VIII	5-6

Table 2: Genders and Classes

The data examined for this study consisted of approximately 600 nouns. Of that number, very few were found in Gender VI and Gender VII. As in the case of certain Bantu languages, many of the nouns in Tikar appear to have been arranged in genders according to semantic criteria. Gender I, for example, contains all human beings, with the exception of two words.[3] There are also a considerable number of animals, fish, birds, and insects in Gender I; however, they are also found in other genders. In most cases, loan words are also found in Gender I. Gender II, on the other hand, is quite miscellaneous, as is Gender V. Gender III contains names of body parts, especially those which are in pairs (*hand(s), foot/feet, ear(s), wing(s), breast(s), shoulder(s), cheek(s),* etc.). It also contains a significant number of nonpersonal animates. Gender VIII contains many long, narrow objects (*cord(s), vine(s), backbone(s), rainbow(s), tail(s), bridge(s), quill(s), leg(s), branch(es),* etc.).

Although the majority of nouns in Tikar have both a singular and a plural form, there are a number of nouns which occur only in the singular or in the plural form. This is true of those designating masses or liquids, as well as most abstract nouns, and those derived from verbs. This leads us to postulate the existence of four single class genders: three singular (1, 3, and 5), and one plural (2). The only set of these single class nouns whose members are found exclusively in one specific class is the one containing nominalized verbs. In Tikar there are two kinds of nouns derived from verbs: those which have a formal derivation prefix (which we have called *nominalized verbs*), and those which have contain no formal mark of derivation (*verbal nouns*). Not only does the presence and absence of the prefix differentiate these forms, but also the fact that verbal nouns never occur in Cl.5, as well

as a semantic difference.[4]

2.1 Classification of Tikar

As we have just seen, the noun class system in Tikar does not have an elaborate set of prefixes such as is normally found in Bantu languages. However, there are a certain number of "exceptions" to the system described in 2.0., which leads to the hypothesis that, historically, Tikar nouns may have had more prefixes. For example, there is a small group of nouns which we have called Class 1A, whose initial syllabic nasal drops when the plural morpheme *mɛ̀* is added. This is true of the following words:

ŋkyìn / mɛ̀ kyìn	"stranger(s)"
ndʊ̀ɛb / mɛ̀ dʊ̀ɛb	"man/men"
nzàn / mɛ̀ zàn	"pygmy/pygmies"
ntɔ̀ʔ / mɛ̀ tɔ̀ʔ	"Bamoun(s)"
m̀bɪ̀ɪ̀ / mɛ̀ bɪ̀ɪ̀	"Babouté(s)"
m̀bɪ̀è / mɛ̀ bɪ̀è	"Mambila(s)"

Note: The last three are people from neighboring ethnic groups.

Hagège (1969:24) suggested that, in addition to the syllabic nasals, there is a syllabic l in Tikar. However, one minimal pair that he used was unverifiable because neither we, nor our language assistants, recognized the words he refers to. In the case of the other pair (*lɛ* "bow" and *lè* "net"), we too felt that there was perhaps something different about the two *l*s, but were never able to prove it, and our language assistants insisted that the two sounds were identical. So, the question remains, was there at one time a syllabic *l* which functioned as a noun class prefix?

Another "exception" to the system is a group of words in Cl.2 for which the corresponding 3rd person non-subject pronoun is *yon*, rather than the normal *bon*. Is this the remants of yet another noun class, or are they simply "exceptions"?

The one other case where we have postulated sub-classes rather than a separate class is in Cl.4, where the plural of a small number of nouns is formed without the use of the typical Cl.4 plural morpheme *yɪ̀*. For some of them there is simply a tone change, such as in ǹnywùn/ŋ̀nywun "hair(s)". For others, the plural is formed by consonant alternation, the most common one being *z/m*, as in zɛʔ/mɛʔ "eye(s)". There is also one case of *s/y* alternation: swum/ywum "thing(s). It should be pointed out however that in our body of data, we only found 5 examples of consonant alternation, and three examples of tone change, as a means of forming the plural.

In light of these examples, one could perhaps hypothesize that, historically, Tikar did have a more developed system of prefixes, and that the present-day system is a much-reduced form of the original one. In fact, a consideration of the history of the Tikar people may shed light on the origin of the noun class system. According to tradition, the Tikar originated in the Mbum region on the Adamaoua plateau of Cameroun.[5] When they arrived on the present-day Tikar plain, they encountered the local inhabitants, a group called the twùmwù. The invading warriors supposedly intermarried with these people and the langauge spoken by succeeding generations was that of the original inhabitants of the region. In fact, the Tikar people still refer to themselves and their language as twùmwù. The name Tikar is the term used by the Mbum to refer to the group who left their region. It is also the term used by the administration and by other ethnic groups. Let us assume that the original twùmwù language was a Bantu language, with a more, or less, well-developed noun class system. Is it not possible that as the invaders settled among the twùmwù and little by little adopted their language, they "imposed", consciously or unconsciously, certain aspects of their own native tongue on the new language? At that point in time, regardless of whether they were indeed

themselves Mbum, or originally from as far away as Bornu, as some suggest, Mbum was undoubtedly their native language. That language is not a Bantu language and does have a system of noun classes. Could this have had an influence on the language of the conquered twùmwù and resulted in a reduction of the noun class prefixes? Since all of that happened at least 200 years ago, this theory can't be proved, but it is an interesting hypothesis.

3. Concord system

Tikar has a structured concord system that affects a wide variety of paradigms: possessives, demonstratives, relative pronouns, pronoun referents, as well as copulas. Numerals and adjectivals also show noun class agreement. Table 3 shows examples of each of these paradigms. In the case of the possessives, a representative form, that of the first person singular, has been chosen. Although the identifiers, demonstratives indicating proximity to the speaker, and non-restrictive relative pronouns are identical in form, they are definitely three distinct morphemes, as the following example illustrates:

(6) kɛ lɛʔ sɛ mùn tǎ lɛʔ sɛ , mǔn lɛʔ
LOC word NonReREL I IMP speak NearDEMAd (CAT) , I speak

kan lɛ kwan làbbi sɛ
NEG that time long ID
"What I'm talking about here isn't the future (Lit: "in this word that I'm saying, I'm not saying that it is a long time.")."

Similarly, the demonstrative pronouns which indicate proximity to the speaker and the restrictive relative pronouns are homophonous in form, but not in function. The restrictive relative pronouns must be followed by a phrase or a clause; the near demonstrative pronouns, on the other hand, can stand alone. For example:

(7) yǎ mwum nɛ nyɛ̀-ɛ̀ "Who is this?
what person ID NearDEMPr-INTER

yǎ mwum nɛ nyì-ì "Who is that?"
what person ID FarDEMPr-INTER

(8) fɛ mùn nyɛ̀ "Give me this one."
give me NearDEMPr

fɛ mùn nyì "Give me that one."
give me FarDEMPr

3.1 Possessives

Unlike the demonstratives (see Section 3.2), where there is a difference in form between the adjectives and the pronouns, the possessive pronouns and the possessive adjectives are identical in form. The one change that occurs is the dropping of the tone on the morpheme-initial nasal when it is preceded by a noun. For example:

(9) ǹyon / dwòn nyon "his / his compound"
his compound his

à ni ǹyon "It's his."
it(Cl.1) COP his

However, it should be noted that N- always becomes N- when preceded by another element in any noun phrase, except the associative construction where there is an underlying tone that functions as an associative marker and causes a variety of tone perturbations.[6] The following examples illustrate the instances where the low tone on the nasal is dropped.

(10) ǹyə̀m / mɛ̀ nyə̀m "animal/animals"
animal / PL animal

ǹlwɛn / ji nlwɛn "good/good food"
good / food good

à ni ǹlwɛn "It is good."
it COP good

The form of the possessives varies according to the person and number of the noun modified or replaced, as well as changing according to the class that noun belongs to. Table 4 shows the complete set of possessives for the six classes:

Possessives							
Class	ID	singular			plural		
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	nɛ	ǹyɛ̀m	ǹywù	nyon	nyɛʔ	ǹyin	nyan
2	bɛ	bɛ̀yə̂m	bɛ̀yû	bɛ̀yon	bɛ̀yɛʔ	bɛ̀yin	bɛ̀yan
3	sɛ	shə̂m	swû	shon	shɛʔ	shin	shan
4	yɛ	yə̂m	ywû	yon	yɛʔ	yin	yan
5	yɛ	yə̂m	ywû	yon	yɛʔ	yin	yan
6	nɛ	ǹyɛ̀m	ǹywù	nyon	ǹyɛʔ	nyin	nyan

Table 4 : Possessives

3.2 Demonstratives

Since there is a difference in form between the demonstrative adjectives and demonstrative pronouns, they are represented separately in Table 3. In both cases, an added distinction is made depending upon the proximity to the speaker of the item in question, thus the terms "near" and "far".

3.2.1 Demonstrative adjectives

The demonstrative adjectives listed in Table 3 are actually only the obligatory part of a three-morpheme construction. The construction consists of a relative pronoun whose form is determined by the noun class of the item in question, the verbal noun *ton* "to stay", plus the morphemes listed in the chart. Thus, the full form for a Cl.3 noun, for example, is:

(11) gbaʔ sɛ ton sɛ "this chair" (not comparing
chair NonReREL stay NearDEMAdj it, simply indicating the chair)

gba? sɛ ton si "that chair" (not comparing
chair NonReREL stay FarDEMAdj it, simply indicating the chair)

gba? she ton sɛ "this chair" (comparing it
chair ReREL stay NearDEMAdj to some other one)

gba? she ton si "that chair" (comparing it
chair ReREL stay FarDEMAdj to some other one)

The minimal form of the demonstrative adjectives, that is, the one listed in Table 3, can also have a cataphoric or anaphoric function on the clause level. For example:

(12) pa? vɛ̀nɛ̀? sɛ ɓwi? ta yɛn sɛ ,
sort suffering NonReREL we ASP see CAT ,

ndikà? ywi
be better death

"(Considering) the kind of suffering we're experiencing here, death would be preferable."

(13) kɛ kɛ̀n sɛ mùn kɛ̀nne swùm si , mŭn
LOC trip NonReREL I went lake ANA , I

ɓæn-ne kan swum ndɔ?
catch-ASP NEG thing a

"On that trip that I took to the lake, I didn't catch anything."

(14) ǹlɛli yɛ mùn lɛ-le yi , mùn
speaking REL I speak-ASP ANA , I

lɛ-le son lɛ̀ ɓwum hwæn
speak-ASP it with people all

"What I said there was for everyone."

(15) ŋ̀gyìn lê (yɛ ton)yi woli...
days three ANA sufficed...

"(When) those three days had passed..."

In all of these examples of the use of the demonstrative adjectives anaphorically or cataphorically, it is possible to find the full expansion of the construction (see Ex.15). However, in most cases only the reduced form is used.

Sentences 13 and 14 above are examples of the demonstrative adjectives used in verb topicalization. The Cl.3 forms sɛ and *si* can also be used as part of the construction whose function is the topicalization of the entire utterance, as in the following examples:

(16) she ɓwi? ta mlă? lwo fɛ sɛ ,
TOP we ASP water draw here CAT ,

a si ɓyɛbbi-ɛ
it COP bad-INT

"The fact that we draw water here, is that bad?"

(17) she wù kɛ̀n-ni ndɛm si , wù shi-â
TOP you go-ASP field ANA , you bring-ASP

mùn gwè-ɛ
me corn-INT

"Having thus gone to the field, did you bring me some corn?"

3.2.2 Demonstrative Pronouns

Although the near demonstrative pronouns are identical in form to the restrictive relative pronouns, they differ from them in function. They can assume all the functions of nominals, including that of N_1 in an associative noun phrase, as well as in a phrase with adjectival attribution. They can also occur in isolation as the subject of an utterance. In this case they replace a noun, a property which they share with the third person pronouns. For example:

(18) NearDEMPro Marie ID
nyɛ̀ Màrî nɛ (Cl.1 item)
she Màrî sɛ (Cl.3 item) "It's Marie's."
ye Màrî yɛ (Cl.5 item)
ɓye Màrî ɓɛ (Cl.2 items) "They are Marie's."

(19) fi mùn nyɛ̀ ndwun "Give me the big one."
give me NearDEMPro big

(20) fi mùn ɓyi "Give me those."
give me FarDEMPro

(21) màn ɓwɛn ni nyɛ̀ tâ sɛti myin
majority children COP NearDEMPro ASP first teeth

ye nji twæ̀bbi
ReREL below push

"The majority of children are those who first of all cut their bottom teeth (Lit.: *the teeth which below*)."

(22) à ɗwo ku? ṅshib yon yɛ ɓe kyi
he begin also song his NonReREL was different
to sing

lɛ̀ ye ɓwùlu
with NearDEMPro the others

"He also began to sing his song which was different than that of the others."

The demonstrative pronouns can co-occur with the identifiers as in the following utterance:

(23) ŋgwisa? nɛ nɛ ɓa nyɛ̀ nun
broom NearDEMAdj ID NEG NearDEMAdj he

cinnin-mɛ ɗyɛ̌ næm nɛ
find-ASP today house NearDEMAdj
"Isn't this broom the one he found today in this house?"

The near demonstrative pronoun *she* is also used in the topicalization of an utterance, as can be seen in examples (16) and (17) above.

The far demonstrative pronouns have a special function in reported speech. There, they are used to refer to the hearer, and are often accompanied by the far demonstrative adjective which in this case adds

an anaphoric value to the construction.[7] The following sentences illustrate this use of the far demonstrative pronouns.

(24) mvon l-i lɛ̀ ɓon lɛ ɓyi
mother-in-law speak-ASP with them that FarDEMPro
ɓi kɛn nun ǹswi? fɛ̌
ANA go her straw cut

"The mother-in-law told them to go and cut straw for her."

(25) à shɛ̀ lɛ̀ jân lɛ nyì ni kɛn
he say with John that FarDEMPro ANA go

"He told John to go."

3.3 3rd person pronouns

As Table 3 shows, the 3rd person pronouns have different forms depending upon whether they function as subject or as non-subject. The following examples illustrate the various forms:

(26) ɓɛ yɛn-nâ nun "They saw him/it."
they see-ASP him/it

(27) à ji-â ɓon "He/It ate them."
he/it eat-ASP them

(28) sɛ kwɛn kan "It doesn't hurt."
it hurt NEG

(29) yɛ yi ɓyibbɔa "They are bad."
they COP bad

(30) ɓon , ɓɛ ɓa kɛ̀n "They aren't going."
they , they NEG go

(31) nun nɛ "It's him/it."
him/it ID

In addition to the construction in (31), it is also possible to have:

(32) à nɛ "Here he/it is."
he/it ?

The question arises then as to whether or not the *nɛs* in these two utterances are the same morpheme, or two separate ones, one of which is the identifier "It is..." and the other, the presentative "Here is...".

3.4 Relative pronouns

There are two series of relative pronouns in Tikar, the non-restrictive ones which introduce a relative clause that simply provides additional information about the head noun; and the restrictive ones which introduce a relative clause that provides information which distinguishes the head noun from other nouns in a similar category. Compare the following:

(33) sɛtênì mwô? nɛ zwô ni lɔn
first child NonReREL on top FarDEMAdj call

"First of all, call that child who is up on top."

(34) sɛtênì mwô? nyɛ̀ zwô ni lɔn
first child ReREL on top FarDEMAdj call

"First of all, call that child who is up on top."
(Implication: There is another child who is not up there.)

3.5 Copula

Tikar has two morphemes which can be translated "to be". One is a full-fledged verb that can take tense and aspect markers; the other, the copula, is an element whose form depends upon the noun class of the subject. The basic functions of the copula are description and location. For example:

(35)	mwɛn	ni	ndwun		"The child is big."
	child	COP	big		
	gba?	si	sɔɗyin		"The chair is little."
	chair	COP	little		
	m̀vɛ̀n	ni	kɛ	ndɛm	"The chief is in the field."
	chief	COP	Loc	field	
	mɛ nà?	ɓi	moan	ɗu?	"The cows are beside the
	PL cow	COP	beside	river	river."

It is not used for identification. As we have already seen earlier in paragraph 2, the identifiers are separate morphemes which serve to delineate the various noun classes. Those same morphemes are also used to express possession. We find for example:

(36)	ǹyɛ̀m	nɛ	"It (Cl.1) is mine."
	shɛ̂m	sɛ	"It (Cl.3) is mine."
	ɓyɛ̂m	ɓɛ	"They (Cl.2) are mine."

3.6 Adjectivals

It is necessary in Tikar to distinguish between two classes of noun qualifiers: those which are derived from verbs, and the non-derived forms. Using the terminology proposed by Welmers[8], we have designated the derived forms "adjectivals", and the non-derived ones "adjectives". Of the two, only the adjectivals show noun class agreement.[9] This agreement consists of a homorganic nasal prefix in the case of Classes 1 and 6. There is a Ø prefix in the case of the other classes, as shown in the following examples:

(37)	mwɛn	ǹ-ywɔli	"an obedient child"
	child	obedient	
	(Cl.1)		
	m̀bɛlɛ̂m	ywɔli	"an obedient gazelle"
	gazelle	obedient	
	(Cl.3)		
(38)	plě	m̀-pwɛbbi	"a clean garment"
	garment	clean	
	(Cl.1)		
	fyǎ?	pwɛbbi	"a clean hand"
	hand	clean	
	(Cl.5)		
(39)	mɛ-she	ŋ̀-kylblea	"difficult tasks"
	PL-task	difficult	
	(Cl.6)		
	yl-kòn	kylblea	"heavy pots"
	PL-pot	heavy	
	(Cl.4)		

The same noun class agreement occurs in a copula construction.

(40)	mwɛn child (Cl.1)	ni COP	ǹywɔli obedient	"The child is obedient."
	ǹbɛlêm gazelle (Cl.3)	si COP	ywɔli obedient	"The gazelle is obedient."

3.7 Numerals

The numerals also show noun class agreement. For example:

(41)	mɛ̀-nsɔ̀n PL-village (Cl.6)	n-lɛ̀ three	"three villages"
	ɓwum people (Cl.2)	lê three	"three people"

Like the adjectivals, the numerals also show noun class agreement in a copula construction.

(42)	ɓwɛn children (Cl.2)	ɓi COP	lê three	"There are three children."
	mɛ̀-nshe PL-bridge (Cl.6)	ni COP	ǹ-lɛ̀ three	"There are three bridges."

4. Conclusion

There seems to us to be no question that Tikar is a bantoid language, both genetically and typologically. The vocabulary is reminiscent of Bantu, and there is a clear system of noun classes. There may not be the "elaborate system of prefixes" that Richardson lists in his criteria for bantoid languages, but the nouns do fall into very definite classes, with a very clear system of concord. Although this paper has only dealt with the noun class system of Tikar, an examination of the morpohological and syntactical structure of other constituents, as well as the phonological characteristics of the language, will reveal marked similarities with the general features of Southern Bantoid languages described by Watters and Leroy (1989). The question that remains, however, is its relationship to the other languages within the Southern Bantoid group - should it be considered as a branch coordinate with other Southern Bantoid subgroups, as proposed by Watters and Leroy (1989:433), or linked to the Bantu node, as Dieu and Renard (1983:51) suggested?

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ENDNOTES

1. Richardson (1957:51)

2. Houis (1967:194)

3. Those two words are dyimi "*fool*" and pwi? "*albino*". When questioned about the fact that *a fool* was in Cl.3, and not Cl.1, the Tikar language assistant replied: "But a fool sometimes sleeps in the forest at night." For the Tikar, it would be unthinkable for an ordinary human being to do that. It is this author's opinion that an albino is also felt to be something less (or more) than human.

4. For a detailled description of these two types of derivation, see Stanley (1991:333-341).

5. For a detailled description of the various accounts of the history of the Tikar people, see Hagège (1969:12-19) and Jackson (1988).

6. For a detailled description of the perturbations in the associative noun phrase, see Stanley (1991:196ff).

7. For a detailled discussion of reported speech in Tikar, see Stanley (1982a).

8. Welmers (1973:250)

9. For a full description of adjectivals and adjectives, see Stanley (1991:269ff)

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